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THE PLOTTER

CLACKAMAS COUNTY AREA T/S
USERS GROUP
NEWS LETTER

VOLUME 4

**

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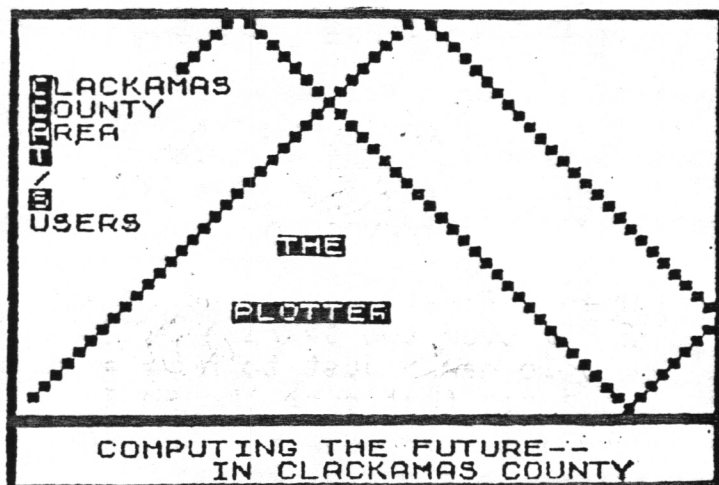
MEETING

The MARCH meeting will be:

on: FRI., March 14, 1986
at: 7:30 P. M.
in: COMMUNITY ROOM
FAR WEST FEDERAL 5 & L
OREGON CITY SHOPPING CENTER

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS ISSUE-

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FROM THE VICE-CHAIRMAN

I recently received a letter from Utorio, Raiatea (French Polynesia) in which the writer, Ken Jackson, re- requested help in getting his Olivetti printer into operation. He is waiting delivery of an AERCO IF so he can operate with his 2068. He is also waiting for a ZEBRA disk system, and a QL with interfaces.

His point in writing was how to figure out the procedures for operating the printer as "the book isn't too clear". How well I know this! He neglected to provide information about any word processor he might be using. As text writing is usually the main use, this is helpful in giving adequate information.

Because of the mix of equipment, this will require some study of the AERCO system and how it will relate to the system I am using. The Oliger printer IF system software can replace the AERCO, (I use the Oliger) but I am not certain if it will work the other way around. I will work this out with Dennis so I can provide as much help as possible.

Now here is a man who is really away from help of all kinds. My thanks for being a part of an active user group.

FROM THE
EDITOR'S DESK

I see that I didn't follow my own recommendation to check my work thoroughly before making the final copy for THE PLOTTER. I do hope to do better this time.

There are probably now 8-10 different brands of large printers in use by our User Group. Prices are sliding downward, making such a purchase more favorable. I would like to provide our readers with comments favorable and otherwise, about each. Not a review but more in the nature of how printer commands are used, how adequate they are, problems of first getting the printer into operation, problems of loading paper (including size limits and labels), suitability of print for copying, how much noise, and problems associated with printer interface and word processor relative to operating your printer.

Now, how about a review along these lines by at least one owner of each printer, to help prospective purchasers of a large printer? After all, if you are the owner of a large printer you should be able to provide at least one column on the subject. Also consider producing a column of print as an exercise of how well you can do it. And produce it ready for printing (so I don't have to copy it).

Follow the format used for articles in THE PLOTTER, using a heading of double wide characters. The maximum length of a column is 10 1/4 inches but better stay with 60 lines, 6 lines per inch, including heading and spaces. If a column is more than 60 lines follow your printer manual to continue to the next page. Use a 3 character left margin and a line length of 36 characters, 10/inch or Pica format.

DON'T fold your copy! Get it to Rod Gowen or myself in good shape. Be sure to have your name on your article.

SECRETARY'S
SECRETS

by Jack Armstrong

The February meeting of CCAT/S was called to order by Chairman Sid Wyncoop at 8:00. He requested that the members that check out material from the library remember to bring them back in proper time to make information available to everyone. CCAT/S Treasury report was approved and the Secretary's report also O.K.'d.

Old Business was info from Rod that we have a few issues left of the T/S Horizons samplers--anyone interested can contact Rod.

Under New Business, Dick notified us that the meeting hall isn't free for our April meet. It was agreed that we would switch to the 3rd Friday of April, the 18th, for April only. He requested that everyone in the club try to contribute materials for the Plotter--any short program, article, or problems would be welcome. They should be 36 columns and dark print to make the editor's job easier. He can't be expected to retype all submissions, but he needs all the help that he can get.

You can give items to Rod Gowen or send them to Dick in Canby.

There followed a discussion on various interesting problems. A question and answer column was suggested and developed wide interest and good input of suggestions and problems. It may develop into a very useful forum for our members. Printers/Word Processors/Interfaces/Drivers and Modem contact were discussed. A list was started of Modem owners who could be contacted. That list will be at the next meeting for anyone to sign on.

If interested, give your name, phone number, type of Modem and hours and days you will be available. Several other subjects were discussed and the meeting was adjourned at 9:00.

There followed informal discussion of various programs, problems, hardware and displays.

BITS & BYTES

y: ROD GOWEN

We hope that this issue of THE PLOTTER finds all of our loyal readers ready for more news from the ever-growing world of SINCLAIR/TIMEX. We know that this column is only one of many like it in newsletters across the country, but there is so much happening in our field that no one writer can hope to keep up with it! Here is what we have picked up on during the past month:

SINCLAIR-has allowed the dealer network across the country to purchase for resale, the QL RGB MONITOR and the QL PRINTER. The RGB MONITOR sells for \$299.00 and the PRINTER for \$279.00. If you are interested in either one of these items, contact your local dealer. RMG ENTERPRISES has them in our local area.

T-S HORIZONS-#17 is nowhere to be seen! We hope that they get their act together soon. We have heard of several dealers who are very unhappy with them because of the fact that an ad placed may not appear until it is too late. I know that any magazine depends on advertisers to keep going and we would hate to lose such a good one.

ZEBRA SYSTEMS-has announced several new products for all of us in the very near future. They are putting out an RS232 adaptor board for the 2060 modem board. It will be sold as a kit and as a bare board with instructions. They have also purchased the rights to market MTERM II and MTERM I software. They will market it along with the ZTERM 64 that they wrote. ZTERM 64 only operates with the OS-64 cartridge in place. MTERM of course, will work with the 2040 and, with proper patches, with big printers. They are also working on a software package to enable a BBS to be operated with the ZEBRA FDD. We look forward to many more products for our computers.

(NOTE: Most Zebra products can be purchased through our local dealer, RMG ENTERPRISES--see ad on Page 8)

LARKEN ELECTRONICS-as noted in last months' column, is sending a fully operational DD I/F to Rod Gowen for evaluation. We will be able to compare it with the other units on the market. It will come with a case and a power supply, ready to hook up to a 5 1/4" DS-DD drive. It will hold up to 80K per side. It is fully compatible with Spectrum emulators. We will also see a review of this system in TIME DESIGNS MAGAZINE.

TIME DESIGNS MAGAZINE-is going to the MIDWEST COMPUTERFEST to be held in Cincinnati on MAY 3-4, 1986. Tim Woods, Editor, said that he would be there to promote his magazine and to report on the doings firsthand. We hope that the turnout is as good as they are expecting. We have had some discussion in the past about trying to set up a show of this sort on the West Coast, but nothing has come of it so far.

EXECUTIVE WORKSHOP-has completed the final version of EXECUTIVE QLUE for the QL. He hopes to get more software ready for the QL in the near future. As noted in our last column, he has several titles in the works. Vince Lyon is also doing our QL QORNER column found elsewhere in THE PLOTTER. Keep up the good work Vince!

PATS-(that's PORTLAND AREA TS users group) has a new newsletter editor, Mike Carver. We are glad to see that someone had enough interest to take it on. Let's wish him luck!

Tune in next month for more info! We hope we told you something that you didn't already know.

#####

PERCENTAGE OFF!

10 PRINT " PERCENTAGE OFF: ";

20 INPUT P

30 PRINT P

40 PRINT "CENTS ";(1-.01*P)*100;"
ON A DOLLAR"

60 GOTO 10

THE RAMEX/AMDEK DISK SYSTEM

A PRODUCT REVIEW
by: ROD GOWEN

PRODUCT NAME: RAMEX/AMDEK AMDISK
III DUAL DD SYSTEM
AVAILABLE FROM: RAMEX INTERNATIONAL
17620 26 MILE ROAD
WASHINGTON, MI 48094
313/781-5800
PRICE: \$299.95 + SHIPPING

This system comes to you complete with an (at present) uncased I/F board, an Amdek Amdisk III Dual 3" Hitachi compact floppy disk drives in a case with power supply and cooling fan, the connecting cable, a utility disk and an operating manual.

When my system arrived I eagerly unpacked it and laid it out on my desk to make sure everything was there. It was, and I proceeded to attach the I/F board to the edge connector of my 2068. I powered down the 2068 and plugged in the I/F. I then plugged the AC cord from the DD into the wall. I then sat back and read the manual that came with the system. I cannot stress enough the importance of reading all instructions and manuals BEFORE you try to use any new equipment.

After reading through the startup instructions and safety precautions, I inserted the Systems disk into drive 1 and turned on the DD and the 2068. As soon as I turned on the 2068, I heard the DD come to life and almost instantly the screen was filled with the auto boot screen with the name and address of the company that wrote the DOS (Disk Operating System), ABBEYDALE DESIGNERS LTD. in England, and also it will tell you that an addendum to the manual is saved on the disk as a Tasword II file. Also on this disk there is a conversion for Tasword II which you Merge with your present version of the program. Once the conversion is done, it takes about 7.5 seconds for TW II to boot up or Load.

The manual that comes with the system is 28 pages in an 8 1/2 x 11 inch format. It has a lot of information in it. I personally found it to be just short of being what I would call "user friendly". It also had one other problem. It was a very poor photocopy. In some places it was so light that I could barely make it out. I understand that a new manual is in the works at Abbeydale.

The SPDOS (Operating System) comes in two versions. There is a standard SPDOS which uses 6K of memory and Minidos, which uses 4K of memory. Here lies the ONLY real DRAWBACK of the entire system. The fact that it requires so much of the RAM to operate. I have been told that they are working on a new EPROM/EXRAM DOS that may only require 750 Bytes or even NO RAM! That, in my opinion, would make this the BEST system on the market for the 2068.

All of the commands that you have already been using for your cassettes are supported with this system. The only change you have to make is to put PRINT #4: before each of the standard commands. Then the command to SAVE a program would look like this: PRINT #4: SAVE "name". If you want to have a program automatically LOAD and RUN as soon as you power up your computer, you simply name the program "AUTO". Any program SAVED with that name will, as soon as you turn on the computer and DD, LOAD and RUN all by itself. (Only 1 AUTO program to a side.) The command list that is supported is listed below:

LOAD: programs, data, MC, strings
SAVE: programs, data, MC, strings
MERGE: programs
CATALOG: gives disk directory
FORMAT: to get new disks ready
ERASE: any file by name
MOVE: files from disk to disk
from drive to drive
COPY: allows direct copy of tapes
to disk

The VERIFY is not used as there is no need for it.

The supplied utilities include the COPY (see above), a "cruncher" which will save you memory on basic programs, and one that reorganises the computer memory so that you can load a lot of Spectrum programs.

As I said above, this system does allow the SAVEing of all forms of files. Strings and variables included. All data files are sequential.

The only other minor drawback to the system is the fact that it is a 3" system. This is not a very common size disk. It means that you may not find them in your local computer supply store. They are readily purchased through several mail order suppliers. The average price at present is \$39 for a box of 10. However, the price is expected to drop with the arrival of the new computer from England using the same size disk. I might mention that these disks are a little different than you are used to seeing. They are encased in a hard plastic case with a sliding metal door to protect the disk surface. They come in a very nice protective plastic box.

To sum up, I will say that of all of the systems I have seen in operation and heard or read about to date, this system has the most to offer for the price. If the DOS-RAM situation is solved, I believe that it will definitely be the best system around. It gives you 184K of program storage per side of the disk, that is with the system operables on the disk. A formatted Data only disk will hold 195K of data. That is just short of 800K for the two drives. I might also mention that these are Single-sided Double-Density drives so you must manually flip the disk to change sides. Not a big deal. When you ask for a Catalog or Directory, you are told the name of the disk, the formatted capacity and the space remaining on the disk, as well as the titles of all files on the disk.

Oh, by the way, the physical dimensions of the components are as follows:

I/F board: 8" wide x 2" high
Amdek Drives: 7 1/2"w x 4 3/4"h x 9"deep
cable: approx. 3 feet

If you are in the market for a DD system, be sure to look at all of the features of all of the available systems and compare objectively. I think that if you do, you won't find one that offers more for the investment.

THE QL CORNER

By Vince Lyon

It may seem logical that the best place to begin a series of new columns on the QL, would be a simple explanation of the basic differences between the QL and other Sinclair computers. Since, however, the QL is based on a new chip with new programming concepts and commands, the QL does not even look like a distant cousin of the 2068, nor appear to come from the same galaxy as the ZX81. There is, simply no comparison.

A quick look at the program below clearly demonstrates this new, unique personality on the QL. As you will notice, the main loop of the program is only four lines long, and the majority of the remainder is a collection of defined procedures and functions that are called by name from the loop.

This ability to define any procedure and call it at will, by name is truly a Quantum Leap over 2068 BASIC. It is, to me, the single most exciting addition to the QL.

Although the program isn't meant to do anything fantastic, it does serve to demonstrate a few of the new commands that are available to the programmer. In the example "FILLS" fills window #1 with periods which serve no purpose other than to prove that as one moves the cursor around, the periods are not erased.

OVER-1: This command reverses the Pixels at the print location. In this example, it permits the cursor to move about without overwriting screen data.

LINE: No longer a DRAW command, LINE permits a user to draw a line from one specific pixel location to another.

LOCAL: Allows a user a to set up a variable for use ONLY within a DEFined procedure. If the same variable is used within the main program, it will not alter the variable in the DEFined procedure (and vice-versa).

THEN RETURN x: A nifty, fast way to say if x=1 then let y=1.

Well, those are a few of the new commands used in this short sample program, and there are many more yet to explore (at least 25). These few examples, however, clearly help me to establish the concept that the QL is indeed unique, with little that appears related to the 2068. If one were to wish to convert this program to run on the 2068, it would be at least twice as long and much slower.

If you have a QL, enter and test the program. If you have a 2068, try to convert it.

Next time we'll look at some more new commands and the speed of the QL putting data on display.

The remainder of the program prints a cross-hair cursor on the screen which can be moved about by use of the cursor keys. The keys are read in "keyread", the position is updated in "position" and the cursor drawn in "lne" (since LINE is a QL command, it could not be used).

Let's look at a few of the new commands used in this program:

```

100 LET a=50:b=50:s=0
110 PAPER 0:=INK 7:BORDER 0,0:CLS
120 PRINT FILL$ ("",665)
130 lne:disp:wprint
140 REMark -----MARK LOOP-----
150 REPEAT loop
160 Position
170 IF s=1 THEN EXIT loop
180 END REPEAT loop
190 REMark -----END MAIN LOOP---
200 STOP
210 REMark -----
220 DEFINE PROCEDURE lne
230 REMark -----
240 OVER-1
250 LINE a,b TO a+10,b:LINE a+15,
    b TO a+25,b
260 LINE a+12,b-12 TO a+12,b-2:LINE
    a+12,b+2 TO a+12,b+12
270 OVER 0
280 END DEFINE
290 REMark -----
300 DEFINE FUNCTION keyread
310 REMark -----
320 LOCAL q$
330 REPEAT loop
340 LET q$=INKEY$(-1)
350 IF q$=CHR$(192) THEN RETURN 1
360 IF q$=CHR$(200) THEN RETURN 2
370 IF q$=CHR$(208) THEN RETURN 3
380 IF q$=CHR$(216) THEN RETURN 4
390 IF q$=CHR$(248) THEN RETURN 5
400 END REPEAT loop
410 END DEFINE
420 REMark -----
430 DEFINE PROCEDURE Position
440 REMark -----
450 LOCAL x
460 REPEAT options
470 x=keyread
480 SELECT ON x
490 =1:lne:LET a=a-1:lne:wprint
500 =2:lne:LET a=a+1:lne:wprint
510 =3:lne:LET b=b+1:lne:wprint
520 =4:lne:LET b=b-1:lne:wprint
530 =5:LET s=1:RETURN
540 END SELECT
550 END REPEAT options
560 END DEFINE
570 REMark -----
580 DEFINE PROCEDURE disp
590 REMark -----
600 WINDOW #2,110,10,200,175
640 DEFINE PROCEDURE wprint
650 REMark -----
660 PRINT #2," ";a;" ";b
670 END DEFINE

```

COMMENTS ON COMPUSERVE

by: ROD GOWEN
CIS# 70436,1542

CIS: That stands for COMPUSERVE INFORMATION SERVICE. The definition is for those of you not familiar with the service.

I thought that I would tell you a little about the DATA LIBRARIES that are available to you on the FAMILY COMPUTING FORUM. There was a lot of talk this month in the TS SIG (that stands for SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP). A couple of people have written a piece of BBS software called TINYBOARD and they uploaded it into the TS data library. It seems from the chatter that there are a couple of bugs in the software, but what new program is ever completely "bugfree" in this business?

To access the TS data library you take the following steps. FIRST, log on as you normally do. SECOND, if you have not set up your personal menu, you must enter the command "GO LUB" at the first prompt. That will take to the FAMILY COMPUTING FORUM. Once there, you will see the menu titled "FUNCTIONS". From this menu you can pick "DATA LIBRARIES". The TS section is # 4. Once into the data library, you can download any of the files that are there. That is possible if you have MTERM II and a 2050 modem or a Byte-Back modem and software. If you have only MTERM I, you will be able to print the data out but will not be able to save it in the buffer. I have used the data library from time to time, and have even printed a few of them in this newsletter.

I hope that this has been of some help. I plan to start a series next month on the basic use of CIS. I hope you will be able to use the information. STAY TUNED!

HELP!

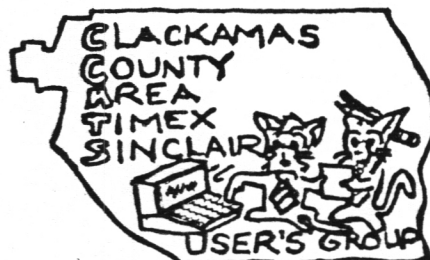
At the February meeting members suggested the addition of a HELP! column. This idea has been tried before but now we have a wider range of problems to be discussed. This is to be just that- members with a problem not solved at a meeting can submit it to THE PLOTTER for publishing. Hopefully, a reader from out there will offer a solution to The Editor for publishing. Use the return address on the page 8 to reach him.

We believe that all questions will warrant considering. There will be those without answers, and some may be too general for a good answer. There will certainly be questions about printers, micro and disc systems as well as computers and programming. Please don't be adverse to sending in answers, we may get several which is fine. We will print all that we can for other readers to use.

The first question is: how can ON ERROR report codes be suppressed (short of not having an error)? Is there a POKE that will do it?

THE EDITOR has one (well, one for this time): how do I program in a left margin for the Olivetti P2300 without using a word processor? I wish to use the OS 64 system with AERCO/OLIGER interface.

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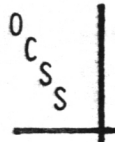
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